

I am in total and complete opposition to the FCC's NPRM Docket WT 05-235 -- the Proposal to Drop the Morse Code Requirement for All Classes of Amateur (Ham) Radio Operators.

Amateur Radio continues to play a vital role in emergency communications. Amateur Radio is part of every state, county, and municipal plan to deal with every sort of emergency situations. With our country still involved in a war on terrorism, the potential of Amateur Radio operators to provide trained, skilled communications in the event of a disaster caused by a terrorist attack is a vital part of Homeland Security. Earlier this year Morse code was successfully utilized to save the lives of countless people in the aftermath of the deadly Tsunami of 26 December in the Indian Ocean region. Morse code communications have saved countless lives, even before the "wireless" age, and continue to do so.

The Amateur Radio service is the ONLY Service left that "teaches" the Art and Skill of Radiotelegraphy and to remove the requirement for Amateur Radio Operators to learn it, even at its most basic (five wpm) level would surely lead to this vital mode of communication's demise. The removal of CW (Morse code) testing will severely reduce or effectively end the ability of Amateur Radio operators to provide emergency communications in the event of a natural or man-made disaster when the only signal that can get through due to interference or having to run extremely low-power, such as operating off of batteries in the aftermath of a major disaster. Morse code would be the simplest method of communicating using homebuilt equipment, due to its on/off keying and simplistic nature of transmission. This would be a vital skill in the event of a terrorist attack that utilized any sort of weapon that creates an EMP (Electro Magnetic Pulse) that takes out all transistorized transceivers and effectively renders 99+ percent of emergency communications useless.

Amateur Radio operators have stepped up, at no cost to anyone, to patriotically serve their country with their skills and their own equipment. And as it stands now, Amateur Radio operators throughout the United States stand ready to provide assistance with communications when the conventional means become unavailable, unusable, or congested. In an International disaster where those in the affected areas speak several different languages and won't necessarily understand each other, the use of International Morse Code, making use of simple abbreviations, symbols and well-understood signals, such as the Q-codes, allows for easily, quick, and simple communications between operators of different nationalities.

The Commission provides written examinations for three (current) classes of Amateur Radio licenses, two of which must currently demonstrate the ability to receive Morse code at a speed of 5 wpm. In the tests for Technician, General, and Extra class operators there are questions on every mode of operation, and I feel that this is vital to becoming a qualified Amateur Radio operator. A radio operator must at least have some basic knowledge of each and every mode available to him/her. Removal of the Morse code requirement would hamper any future General and Extra class license holders by not giving them at least the basic and fundamental knowledge of International Morse Code communications and the Commission has not proposed an alternative method of learning Morse code.

Learning Morse code is a very simple and easy skill to obtain, as there are only 45 characters or symbols required for routine communications using the International (Morse) code, thus any reason to remove the requirement to learn to receive CW at 5 wpm serves no purpose and will only hurt the Amateur Radio Service and hamper its ability to provide truly effective and simple emergency communications. Removal of the Morse Code Requirement would be contrary to the FCC's Rules for the Amateur Radio Service, 97.1 Basis and purpose, subsections A C & D. This is the core, the very heart and soul of Amateur (Ham) Radio.

In closing, please consider all of the potential negative effects of removing the Morse Code requirement for the Amateur Radio Service and the inevitable harm that it will do to the invaluable emergency communications that Amateur Radio provides, on a daily basis. The FCC must seek out a better way of testing potential licensees, and must not remove the Morse code requirement. The cost of this is small in comparison to the cost of destroying the future ability for Amateur Radio operators to provide essential emergency communications during disasters when no other mode of communications will get through other than simple low-power Morse code signals. Removal of the Morse code requirement is more than just about testing for licenses, and continuing a tradition, but rather about saving lives.

Sincerely,

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